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Appl. No.: 10/022,180

Docket No. KC-16260

IN THE CLAIMS:

1. (currently amended) A method of making an absorbent nonwoven web, comprising:

a) producing a mass of thermoplastic substantially continuous multicomponent filaments by entraining molten thermoplastic polymers into a first air stream and drawing and containing the filaments in a fiber distribution unit;

b) introducing absorbent particles via a second air stream into the fiber distribution unit at a point above a divergence zone occurring in the fiber distribution unit ~~of for the mass of filaments in the fiber distribution unit~~;

c) allowing the mass of multicomponent filaments and absorbent particles to mix in the fiber distribution unit and collecting the mixture onto a forming wire in a uniform distribution of filaments and absorbent particles;

d) running the collected mass of filaments and absorbent particles through a heater at a time and temperature sufficient to soften at least one polymer of the multicomponent filaments; and

e) densifying the softened mass of filaments and the absorbent particles.

2. (previously presented) The method of making an absorbent nonwoven web of Claim 1, further including passing the collected mass of filaments and absorbent particles through a heater at a time and temperature sufficient to fully activate the at least one polymer of the multicomponent filaments to a liquid state and densifying the heated mixture at a pressure and time sufficient to contact at least a majority of the absorbent particles to the fully activated mass of multicomponent filaments.

3. (previously presented) The method of making an absorbent nonwoven web of Claim 1, further including cooling the densified mass of filaments and absorbent particles.